NAMMCO

30 Years: 1992 - 2022

NAMMCO ANNUAL MEETING 30

MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE FOR CETACEANS

1 March 2023 online
14:00 – 17:00 CET

DRAFT ANNOTATED AGENDA

1. CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

Relevant Documents for this Meeting:
NAMMCO/30/MC/05: Recent Proposals for Conservation and Management and Research Recommendations
NAMMCO/30/MC/06: Summary of Requests from the NAMMCO Council to the Scientific Committee and Responses by the Scientific Committee
NAMMCO/30/08: Report of the 29th Meeting of the Scientific Committee

This meeting will focus on:

- *Reviewing the new information on cetacean species provided by the Scientific Committee during its last meeting in 2023 (SC/29).*
- *Considering both the new and reiterated proposals for conservation and management and recommendations for research (with implications for Member Countries) made by SC/29.*
- *Reviewing responses from SC/29 to active requests for advice and determining whether any requests may be considered completed and closed.*

The MCC is specifically asked to discuss and decide whether to:

- *endorse the SC proposals for conservation and management,*
- *endorse the SC recommendations for research (with financial implications)*
- *recommend to Council that the requests the SC considers answered be closed.*

The relevant requests and responses from the SC are given under the respective agenda items.

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

3. CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR WHALE STOCKS

3.1 NARWHAL

NAMMCO/30/08, item 12.1

Active and standing requests:

- ***R-3.4.11 (standing):*** *To update the assessment of both narwhal and beluga, noting that new data warrant such an exercise.*

From SC/29:

Related to work done by the NAMMCO-JCNB Joint scientific Working Group (JWG) and the Ad hoc Working Group on Narwhal in East Greenland (NEGWG) which will meet in the autumn 2023.

Recommendations arising from the joint NAMMCO-JCNB Workshop on disturbance (December 2022) endorsed by the SC are given below.

Recommendations pertaining to removals:

Greenland

- To implement an immediate reduction to 0 catches of narwhal in all three management areas of East Greenland. (*Strongly reiterated*)
- Catch limits for West Greenland provided by the JWG be followed.

Recommendation for Conservation and Management

Greenland

- Due to the observed displacement of narwhals from Eclipse Sound caused by shipping traffic and associated ice breaking, future developments avoid shipping within the narwhal summering aggregations.
- Because ship traffic causes significant disturbance to narwhals at distances from 0 to 20 km, while icebreaking can cause impacts at distances from 0 to 35 km, these values be used to establish buffer zones around narwhal summer aggregations and establish traffic corridors to protect migration routes and winter foraging grounds.
- Due to its importance as a feeding ground for many Arctic seabirds and marine mammal species, no ship anchoring should occur in Store Hellefiskebank.
- Hunt management advice should account for the displacement and possible associated changes in fecundity and survival, both in disturbed summer aggregations, as well as in aggregations affected by the displaced animals.

New Recommendations for Research:

Greenland

- Conduct tagging studies to determine impacts of shipping in Baffin Bay.
- Obtain biological samples (brains, organs etc.) and morphometrics from the narwhal winter hunt in Disko Bay and the spring hunt in other areas of West Greenland.

3.2 BELUGA

NAMMCO/30/08, item 12.2

Active and standing requests:

- ***R-3.4.11:*** *"To update the assessment of both narwhal and beluga, noting that new data warrant such an exercise."*

From SC/29:

Related to work done by the NAMMCO-JCNB Joint scientific Working Group (JWG) and the Ad hoc Working Group on Narwhal in East Greenland (NEGWG) which will meet in the autumn 2023.

Belugas are occasionally observed in East Greenland, but no population has been identified. Based on preliminary genetic analyses from belugas caught in 2021, these animals are considered to belong to the Norwegian (Svalbard) stock estimated to 549 animals (2018 survey).

SC/29 reiterated recommendations from SC/28 and added one from the joint NAMMCO-JCNB Workshop on disturbance (December 2022):

Recommendations pertaining to removals:

Greenland

- Implement seasonal closures for the hunt of belugas in West Greenland. (*Strongly reiterated*)
- Make sure no hunting of belugas be allowed at any time in the area south of 65 degrees North in West Greenland. (*Strongly reiterated*)
- Keep belugas in East Greenland fully protected, as there is insufficient information to perform an assessment of belugas in East Greenland. (*Strongly reiterated*)

Recommendation for Conservation and Management

Greenland

- Ship speed regulations of 8 knots be extended to south of the beluga migration route passing Cape York in September-October. This recommendation does not include a buffer around the timing of shipping *(New*)
- Any by-catch of belugas in East Greenland be documented in the Special Reports. (*Reiterated*)
- In case of live by-caught belugas in East Greenland, all efforts be made to release the animal. (*Reiterated*)
- Additional samples be taken from all dead by-caught belugas in East Greenland, and all caught belugas in West Greenland, besides the already mandatory information (date and location of the by-catch, sex, presence/absence of a foetus). This additional information includes skin biopsy sample, length, a tooth, girth measurements, and whether there is milk in the mammary glands of females. (*Reiterated*)
- The documentation of hunter observations of belugas in East Greenland is collected in a structured manner, including photographs or video footage of the animals, information on where and when the sighting took place, and how many individuals were seen. (*Reiterated*)

3.3 HARBOUR PORPOISE

NAMMCO/30/08, item 12.3

Active request:

- ***R-3.10.1****: The Council requested the SC to perform an assessment of harbour porpoise through the species range, which might include distribution and abundance, stock identity, biological parameters, ecological interaction, pollutants, removals and sustainability of removals.*

From SC/29:

Recommendations pertaining to removals:

Norway

- Continue its efforts to reduce by-catch of harbour porpoises which is deemed unsustainable.

Greenland

- That previous management advice given on harbour porpoise in West Greenland be implemented (i.e., no more than 2900 total removals, i.e., included unreported individuals)

Recommendation for Conservation and Management

Norway

- Assess the compliance of the fleet to the pinger regulations in Vestfjorden as a basis for evaluating the efficacy of the pinger mandate.
- Consider expanding the use of pingers to areas north and west of Vestfjorden.
- Due to the present unsustainable level of by-catch, consider the best way of ensuring that the mandatory use of pingers is enforced.
- Implement the use of REM systems in fishing vessels outside the CRF, to complement the by-catch data from the CRF.

Recommendations for Research with implications for Parties

Faroe Islands

- Support the creation of an App where users of coastal areas (i.e., fishers, recreational boats) can report observations, catch and by-catch of harbour porpoises.
- Initiate the collection of biological data on harbour porpoise.

Iceland

- Generate the best back-calculated by-catch estimates (i.e., a time series going back to the beginning of the fishery) for the upcoming Icelandic assessment.

Norway

- By-catch estimates be back-calculated as far back as possible (e.g., until 1970) using landings and included in future assessments.
- Increase tagging efforts to inform on movements, distribution, and stock delineation of harbour porpoise in Norwegian waters.
- Collect more biological samples to increase the life history information feeding the population models.
- Look into potential by-catch of porpoises in recreational fisheries to potentially include recreational fisheries in future by-catch estimates.
- Include by-catch data from larger (>15m) vessels into the by-catch estimates used for the assessment.
- Look into the effects of ghost nets on harbour porpoise mortality dynamics and, if a concern, increase efforts in removing ghost nets in areas of high porpoise density.

3.4 WHITE-BEAKED, WHITE-SIDED AND BOTTLENOSE DOLPHINS

NAMMCO/30/08, item 12.4

Active request:

- ***R-3.9.6****: to carry out assessments of dolphin species for which there are removals.*

From SC/29:

Recommendations for Research with implications for Parties

Faroe Islands

- Age determination from random teeth samples from different periods of time should be added to the age structure information on *Lagenorhynchus acutus*.
- Investigate any changes in age structure over different years to resolve whether some cohorts are underrepresented in the samples.
- Complete the analyses of life history parameters.
- Together with Greenland, collect data for genetic analyses and make sure they are integrated within the current European genetic analyses for *Lagenorhynchus* sp. coordinated by ASCOBANS.

Greenland

- Increase effort in collecting samples for genetic analysis.
- Prepare catch statistics separating both species, where possible.

Iceland

- Provide a table with the by-catch information available for each *Lagenorhynchus* species.

3.5 PILOT WHALE

NAMMCO/30/08, item 12.5

Active request:

- ***R-3.8.6:*** *To continue work to complete a full assessment of pilot whales in the North Atlantic and provide advice on the sustainability of catches, as soon as necessary further information becomes available, with particular emphasis on the Faroese area and East and West Greenland.*

From SC/29:

The WG on Pilot Whale is postponed to 2025 to have the new abundance estimates from NASS 24 as input.

Recommendations for Research with implications for Parties

Faroe Islands

- The high number of available data (2000+), 150+ teeth samples collected randomly in 2013-2022 should be aged and the corresponding reproductive data analysed to obtain a long-term trend in life history parameters.
- Collect and analyse genetic samples together with Iceland and Greenland, to get better knowledge on stock identity.
- Investigate the potential relationship between pollutants and life history parameters of pilot whales between the first sampling period (1986-1989) and the present one (2013-2022).

3.6 KILLER WHALE

NAMMCO/30/08, item 12.6

From SC/29:

Recommendations pertaining to removals:

Greenland

- Regulate the hunt of killer whales and restrict quotas in a precautionary way. (*Reiterated*)

Recommendation for Conservation and Management

Greenland

- Existing catch records be validated and reporting on catches (including struck and loss rates) be improved. (*Reiterated*)
- Killer whales be included in existing mandatory reporting schemes. (*Reiterated*)

Recommendations for Research with implications for Parties

All countries

- To further sampling efforts in all NAMMCO countries, as well as further analyses of pollutant levels and genetic analyses to help determine stock structure.

4. ANY OTHER BUSINESS